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Canterbury etc. Convocation*

REPRESENTATION

Of the Present

State of Religion,

With regard to the late excessive Growth of

Infidelity, Heresy and Profaneness:

As it passed the

Lower House of Convocation

OF THE

Province of *Canterbury*.

Corrected from the Errors of a former Edition.

To which is added,

The REPRESENTATION, as drawn
up by the Upper-House.

L O N D O N:

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REPRESENTATION

State of Religion

including Heresy and Paganism



Province of Canterbury

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May it please Your Majesty,



E, the Archbishop, the Bishops, and the Clergy of the Province of Canterbury, in Convocation assembled, are deeply sensible of the many Blessings and Advantages of Your Gracious and Prosperous Reign: Amongst which, there is none that more affects us, than the tender Care and Concern shewn by Your Majesty for the flourishing State of Religion, and the Godly Zeal You have express'd against the wicked Practices of Those, who, by loose and profane Principles, openly propagated among your Subjects, have endeavour'd to undermine and destroy it.

We are thankful to Almighty God, who hath put it into Your Royal Heart to repress these daring and impious Attempts; and, for that End, to call upon Your Clergy for their Counsel and Assistance.

It is, on many Accounts, our Duty, to do the utmost that in us lies, towards promoting so excellent a Work. We have, therefore, apply'd our selves with diligence to consider the Matters to us referr'd; and do now, in Obedience to Your Royal Commands, humbly lay before Your Majesty,

A REPRESENTATION of the present State of Religion among Us, with regard to the late excessive Growth of Infidelity, Heresy and Profaneness.

WE cannot, without unspeakable Grief, reflect on that Deluge of Impiety and Licentiousness, which hath broke in upon us, and over-spread the Face of this Church and Kingdom; eminent, in former times, for Purity of Faith, and Sobriety of Manners.

The Source of these great Evils, as far back as We have trac'd it, seems to have been, that long unnatural Rebellion, which loosen'd all the Bands of Discipline and Order, and overturn'd the goodly Frame of our Ecclesiastical and Civil Constitution.

The Hypocrisy, Enthusiasm, and variety of wild and monstrous Errors, which abounded, during those Confusions, begat in the Minds of Men (too easily carried into Extremes) a disregard for the very Appearances of Religion, and ended in a Spirit of downright Libertinism and Profaneness, which hath ever since too much prevail'd among Us. It was, indeed, check'd, and kept under, for a time, by the Legal Restraints laid on the Press, and by the just dread of Popery, which hung over our Heads: But, as soon as these Fears were removed, and those Restraints were taken off, it broke out with the greatest Freedom and Violence.

There have not been wanting, God be praised; the hearty Endeavours of good Men to resist the Growth of these spreading Evils. Books have been written in defence of the Fundamental Truths, whether of natural or reveal'd Religion, with great Clearness, and Strength of Argument; the vain Pleas of the several Advocates for Infidelity have been particularly consider'd, and refuted; Societies have been form'd, and Funds of Charity rais'd, for the Propagation of our holy

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holy Faith, for the pious Education of poor Children, and for the Increase of Christian Knowledge, by plain and useful Discourses, distributed among the meaner Sort, in great Variety and Number. Authority hath often interpos'd, for the countenancing these excellent Designs, for withstanding the bold Attempts, and preventing the farther Increase of Irreligion and Profaneness. To this end, Royal Injunctions, and Proclamations have issued, Acts of Parliament have passed, Prosecutions at Law have been ordered, gracious Speeches from the Throne have been made; and from thence such bright Patterns of Piety and Vertue have shone forth, as would in any Age, less profligate than this, have diffus'd their happy Influence thro' all Orders of Men among us.

But it must be confess'd, that all the Endeavours which may hitherto have been used, by publick or private Persons, to stop the Growth of this Evil, have prov'd ineffectual. In the midst of such Discouragements Infidelity hath taken deep Root, and, being cultivated with Care, hath spread its Branches wide, and shot up to an amazing height, and brought forth Fruits in great abundance.

We forbear to wound Your pious Ears by a particular mention of those many Blasphemous Passages, which have been publish'd from the Press. Nevertheless, in discharge of the Trust repos'd in us by Your Majesty, we think our selves oblig'd to lay before You some Account of the various Steps taken to undermine the Foundations of Christianity, and to infect the Minds of Your People, with Atheism, Deism, Heresy, and every pernicious and destructive Error. We shall proceed afterwards to consider the dark and subtle METHODS, by which this Mystery of Iniquity hath been carry'd on; to enquire into the CAUSES which have chiefly and most immediately given Birth to it, and into the sad CONSEQUENCES with which it has been attended; and then in all Humility to propose such REMEDIES, as, we think, may be most effectual for the Cure of it. The

The Dispute with our Enemies of the Church of *Rome* (manag'd with so much Honour and Advantage to the Church of *England*) was no sooner happily ended, but other Adversaries arose, who openly attack'd the Fundamental Articles of the Catholick Faith, and scatter'd the Poison of *Arian* and *Socinian* Heresies thro' all Parts of this Kingdom. The Doctrine of a *Trinity of Persons* in the *Unity of the Godhead* was then deny'd and scoffed at, the Satisfaction made for the Sins of Mankind by the precious Blood of Christ was renounced and exploded; the ancient Creeds of the Church were represented as unwarrantable Impositions, and treated with Terms of the utmost Contumely and Reproach. And the Divulgers of these wicked Errors and Blasphemies proceeded with as little Disguise and Caution, as if some new Law had been made in their Favour; notwithstanding that Care had been taken by Those, who pass'd the *Act of Indulgence*, expressly to exclude **T H E M** from the Benefit of it.

In defiance of this Act, and of all the Laws then in Force, they not only own'd their pestilent Errors, but set up for making Profelytes, by a multitude of wicked Books and Pamphlets, which, for some Years, they dispers'd from the Press, without Control or Discouragement.

They at last proceeded so far, as even to set up a Religious Assembly, where Divine Worship was publickly perform'd, in a way agreeable to the Principles of the *Unitarians*, and Weekly Sermons were preach'd in Defence of them.

Nor have these Hereticks been with-held, by the publick Notice lately taken of their wicked Positions, from venting them anew, and with yet greater Boldness. Even at the Time when we are thus met by Your Majesty's Writ, and exhorted by Your Gracious Letter to consult of Methods for repressing such Impieties, a Book hath been Printed, wherein the *Arian* Doctrine is avow'd and maintain'd; and a Promise is made of evincing the Truth of it, by large and elaborate

borate Proofs, in other Treatises, from the same Hand, which are soon to follow. To this Book the Author hath prefix'd his Name, and hath not been afraid to dedicate it to the Archbishop, Bishops and Clergy of this Province in Convocation assembled; being, as we have some reason to believe, supported in this Undertaking, and encouraged to prosecute it, by the liberal Contributions, and insidious Applauses of those, who are the determin'd Enemies of all Religion and Goodness.

It was by such Men as these that the *Socinian* Tracts, when first publish'd, were much countenanc'd and recommended: For they well knew, that the chief Articles of the Christian Faith being once shaken, a Way would by that means be open'd, and the Minds of Men prepar'd, for the Attacks, which might afterwards be made on Christianity it self; and into which the *Socinian* Controversy soon was improv'd.

For the Books written, in an argumentative way, against the Divinity of our blessed Lord, did, in a little time, produce others of a worse Spirit and Tendency; wherein the Doctrines, by him reveal'd, were spoken of with prophane Levity and Contempt, his Humiliation and Sufferings were derided, his Person was blasphem'd, and treated with as great Indignity and Scorn, as when he stood at the Judgment-Seat of *Pilate*.

The God-head of the Holy Spirit being first deny'd, all Supernatural Operations on the Hearts of Men were afterwards question'd, and the Grace of God was ridicul'd. All Mysteries in Religion were exploded, as absurd and useless Speculations; as implying Contradictions, and meaning nothing; and therefore, as incapable of becoming Objects of Assent to reasonable Minds.

The Scheme of Morality propos'd by the Gospel, was undervalu'd, and said not to be beyond the reach of Humane Invention; the *Mosaick* Account of the Creation was represented as mere Allegory, and Fable;

ble; the natural Immortality of the Soul was oppos'd, as a vulgar and groundless Error; the Inspiration of Holy Writ was so explain'd, as amounted to a Denial of it; the Authority of the present Canon of Scripture, hath been represented as standing upon a very precarious Foundation; the Spuriousness of several Passages, and some Books of it was more than insinuated. Priests without Distinction, were traduc'd, as Imposers on the Credulity of Mankind; vilify'd and insulted, as the Filth and Off-scowring of all Things: And those Religious Ordinances, which they were appointed to dispense, even the chief of them, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, were spoken of with such a degree of ungodly Mockery, and insolent Scorn, as fill'd the Hearts of good Christians with Horror and Astonishment. Nay, Religion it self was, in some of their loose Writings so describ'd, as if it were nothing but a melancholly Frenzy, and pious Enthusiasm.

The Grounds of believing the Gospel, in this Age, have been represented, as less firm and certain, by a pretended Calculation of the Degrees, according to which the Credibility of the Traditional Facts related in Scripture, must every Age decrease. The Necessity of all Humane Thoughts and Actions, as being mere Modes of Motion, and the results of pure Mechanism, hath been asserted: An Assertion, which overturns the Foundations of all Religion, whether Natural or Instituted; and renders all Notions of Good and Evil, of Reward and Punishment, whether in this Life, or the next, groundless and vain.

Nor ought We, among the several Instances of Infidelity, and of the Approaches made towards it, to omit the mention of those damnable Errors, which have been embraced, and propagated by the Sect of Quakers; who, in several of their Treatises, in their Catechisms, and Primers, have taught the Rudiments of the Christian Faith in such a manner, as to make it seem to be little more than a complicated System of *Deism* and *Enthusiasm*.

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From the wicked Principles thus disseminated, as wicked Practices have follow'd. For, tho' it may with Truth be affirm'd, that the Good Christians among Us were never better than now ; yet can it not withal be deny'd, that the Bad were never worse ; and that the Instances of a Profane and dissolute Behaviour, have of late Years, been very Numerous, and very Scandalous.

The frequency of Oaths and Imprecations, the manifest Growth of Immorality and Profaneness, have made new Laws, new Edicts, necessary to restrain these Enormities ; which yet have not been effectually restrain'd by them.

Seldom hath greater Vigilance been us'd by the Civil Magistrate, to secure a Religious Observance of the Lord's Day ; nor hath it, among the meaner Sort, prov'd unsuccessful. However, it hath not banish'd Excess and Luxury, at such times, from the Tables of the Great, nor hindred them from wasting those sacred Hours in Play and vain Amusements.

The Excesses of Gaming have never been more general and flagrant ; Conscience hath never been more openly prostituted to Interest, without any regard to Censure ; the Extremes of Avarice and Profusion have never, at the same point of Time, been more remarkably prevalent.

A due regard to Religious Persons, Places and Things, hath scarce in any Age been more wanting. The Ministers of Christ have been often treated in a way very unsuitable to their sacred Function and Character ; Horrid Outrages have been committed by loose and disorderly Persons, in the House of God ; the solemn Fasts and Humiliations of the Church, have been matter of Sport to lewd and godless Men, who have taken Pleasure in ridiculing them, and affronting the Authority by which they were appointed : Unnatural and abominable Impurities, not to be named among Christians, have been publicly practis'd ; and the Debauches of licentious Men have been indulg'd to such a height, as to end in all manner of Blasphemy and Profaneness.

This sad Harvest We have reap'd from those Seeds of Infidelity, which the Enemy hath sown among Us: With what Industry and Zeal, by what dark and subtle ME-

THODS this Mystery of Iniquity hath been carry'd on, We beg leave in the next Place to represent :

That Contributions have been made, that Combinations of Men have been formed, for promoting the Cause of Infidelity, We have heard ; nor do We doubt of the Truth of those Reports : Having observ'd, that the late Measures taken to advance Irreligion, have been, in many respects, so uniform and regular, that they seem to have been concerted ; not to have sprung meerly from the casual Contradiction, and divided Efforts of particular Persons, but rather to have been the result of united Counsels and Endeavours.

Thus, We are sure, the *Socinians* and *Quakers* took care of the Interests of their several Sects, and spread their distinguishing Tenets : Nor do the present Factors for Infidelity and Libertinism appear to be either less Zealous for the attaining their End, or less skilful in the Choice and Application of the Means that lead to it.

The Methods they have pitch'd upon to this Purpose, have been various : Some of them such, as had a more direct and immediate Tendency to the Point they aim'd at ; others, that were cover'd with very artificial Pretences and Disguises.

By *Mock-Catechisms*, fram'd in a light manner, upon vain and trifling Subjects, they have endeavour'd to depreciate those excellent Summaries of the Christian Faith, by which a right Sense of Religious Truths is first instill'd into the Minds of Children.

They have republish'd, and collected into Volumes, Pieces written long ago on the side of Infidelity, which would have lain altogether neglected and forgotten, without such a Revival.

They have reprinted together in the most contracted manner, many loose and licentious Poems, in order to their being purchas'd more cheaply, and dispers'd more easily ; and have by that means, convey'd the Infection to great Numbers of Men, who would otherwise have lain without the reach of it.

They have procur'd Abstracts and Commendations of their own profane Writings (and probably drawn up by themselves) to be inserted in foreign Journals ; and then have translated them back again into the *English* Tongue,

Tongue, and publish'd them here at Home, in order to add the greater weight to their wicked Opinions.

They have endeavour'd utterly to root out of Mens Minds all Notions of a Church, as a Society instituted by Christ, with peculiar Powers and Privileges, and Officers of its own to administer the Affairs of it. They have done their utmost to blend and confound this Spiritual Society with the Temporal; on purpose to make every thing in Religion, its divine Truths, and most sacred Ordinances, dependent on the Will of the Civil Magistrate, as deriving solely from Him their Sanction and Authority.

And of all Churches, our Own, is That, against which they have planted their chief Batteries, and directed their fiercest Assaults; not, as judging it more faulty than others (for they themselves allow it to be the least exceptionable of any) but as knowing it to be the strongest Fence and Bulwark against Infidelity, the principal Pillar and Stay of pure undefiled Religion.

They have therefore charg'd the authentick Articles of this Church, and the *English* Editions of the Bible, with pious Frauds and Forgery; that Men might be taught gradually to withdraw the Reverence due to their Spiritual Guides, and of course to suspect, whatever comes recommended from their Hands.

As to other Sects and Denominations of Christians, differing from the Establish'd Church, and now tolerated among Us, the Crew of *Libertine-Writers* hath been observ'd to pursue them, with a degree of Malice and Bitterness, proportion'd always to the degrees of Tendency which their respective Principles have, to support and strengthen the Interests of Religion, by uniting large Numbers of Christians in National Churches and Communions.

Sometimes by displaying the Cheats and Impositions of *Pagan*, and *Popish Priests*, they have endeavour'd to draw Infamy on the Priesthood in general, and to render the Order it self, in what Religion soever it was found, equally the Object of publick Aversion and Contempt.

At other times, when wild Pretences to Inspiration and Miracles have been set up by modern Impostors, they

have seem'd to countenance the Fraud, and give Credit to it; with a view of drawing Parallels from thence, to the Prejudice of real Inspirations and Miracles.

They have, in a grave and solemn manner, recounted the fabulous Relations of Miracles, occurring in Hea-then Writers: They have represented these Accounts, as carrying some of the chief Marks and Signatures of Truth; and easier to be contemn'd, than disprov'd, upon the foot of the Arguments urg'd in behalf of the Truth of Christianity.

They have, with Ostentation, enumerated the several Spurious Treatises, forg'd in the earliest Ages of the Church; which they represent as Times of great Fraud and Imposture, on the one hand; of great Ignorance and Credulity, on the other; and they have left this Reflection to be apply'd, by their Readers, to the Books of the new Testament, and the Authors of them.

The Promises of Scripture have, by one of these Writers, been Interpreted, in such an extravagant and absurd Sense, as was intended to render them uncertain, and unintelligible; and a Plea hath been advanced in behalf of the Privilege of being translated to Heaven, without dying, according to the Terms of the Covenant of Grace, with a design to insinuate, that our Title to the other Privileges, and Promises of the Gospel, is founded on no surer a bottom.

Under the Cover of accounting for the growth of Deism, and specifying the Causes of it, they have taken occasion to suggest all those bitter and spiteful Reflections, which, they thought, might redound to the dishonour of our holy Religion, and wound it thro' the Sides of its profess'd Servants and Followers.

Their receiv'd Maxim is, that *no Good is to be expected from Ecclesiasticks, but by their Divisions*: and, therefore, if Differences happen at any time to arise among the Clergy, their constant practice hath been, to foment and inflame them, by turning Advocates for the one side against the other; whereas, in Truth, they themselves were alike Enemies to both, and were also in like manner detested by both of them.

When particular and unwarrantable Opinions have at any time been maintain'd, by Men otherwise eminent
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for Piety and Learning, the Friends of Infidelity have not fail'd to lay hold of that Opportunity, and improve it to the prejudice of Religion. Those very Persons, whose Learned Labours in defence of our Common Faith they had before undervalu'd, and held in utmost contempt, they began now to extol, and pretended to revere for the sake of their Errors; their deep Judgment they admir'd, their Integrity they magnify'd, and appeal'd to their Authority, as decisive, in favour of a Paradox, when they would have refus'd to be concluded by it in any other Point whatsoever.

We pretend not to have made a full Discovery of all the dark and subtle Wiles, by which the Instruments of Satan have endeavour'd to establish his Kingdom, and to introduce a general Looseness of Principles and Practices among us: But these, which We have now laid before Your Majesty, are too obvious and manifest, not to be observ'd and complain'd of by us.

However, neither these, nor any other wicked Arts, and Methods, how craftily soever contriv'd, and how industriously soever pursu'd, would have met with so remarkable Success, had not other CAUSES and Circumstances concurr'd to help forward the Event, and favour the Growth of irreligious Opinions.

Among the chief of these, we reckon, the Removal of that Restraint, which the Wisdom of former Times had laid upon the Press; and which no sooner ceas'd, than those pernicious Principles, that before had been whisper'd only in Corners, among the Dissolute and Lawless, were now proclaim'd in our Streets, and sent abroad to pollute the Minds of Your Majesty's Subjects, in all Parts of Your Dominions.

The meanest and most ignorant of the People, who had any degree of Curiosity and Leisure, were then tempted to employ it in Searches, for which they were no ways qualify'd: they were furnish'd every Day from the Press with Objections against Religion; and taught to doubt of those Truths, which it had otherwise never once enter'd into their Hearts to question.

This general Liberty of the Press happen'd not long after the Time, when, by reason of Confusions and Disorders that usually attend great Changes of State,
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the Reins of Government were unavoidably slacken'd, and Parties of Men were suffer'd to express their mutual Resentments, and manage their Debates against each other, with a freedom not often permitted, or practis'd in more quiet and settled Times. Mean while, the Indulgence granted to Men, of worshipping God in their own way, incited some publickly, and with warmth, to espouse these Religious Opinions, which others thought themselves bound with equal warmth, to oppose. These Contentions in Matters of a civil and sacred Nature, bred in the Minds of Men, not well grounded in true Principles, great Perplexities and Doubts; and gave an Opportunity to those, who *sat in the Seat of the Scornful*, to promote the Interests of Scepticism, and Infidelity, by making Sport with our Divisions.

The Licentiousness of the Stage is another Fountain, from whence the present Corruptions of Religion and Morality have flow'd. On our Theatres, Things Sacred and serious have been handled after the most Ludicrous manner; the Priesthood, the holy Offices, and Ceremonies of our Church have been expos'd to Scorn; Obscenity, Blasphemous Allusions to Holy Writ, and various Sorts of Prophaneness have abounded: The worst Examples have been plac'd in the best Lights, and recommended to imitation; and the vicious Images, thus painted to the Life, and set out with all manner of advantage, have made such Impressions on the minds of the Young and the Unwary, as are not easy to be effac'd.

For the better diffusing the Infection, New Theatres have been rais'd; and, at the opening of one of them (an expensive and magnificent Structure) the building of Churches was impiously derided, as a vain and useless Work, the effect only of Superstition and Ignorance.

God be thanked, at that very time a different Spirit prevail'd; and great Sums of Money were by publick Authority provided, and apply'd for the building, supporting, and adorning of Churches: And we cannot but hope, but this glorious Work which Your Majesty, at our humble Request was graciously pleased to recommend to Your Parliament, in the Advancement of which, the Zeal of Your Parliament, influenced by that of Your Majesty, hath already made so great a Progress, will be
speedily

speedily accomplish'd by an ample Provision for the Wants of that kind, under which the Inhabitants of these two Populous Cities have hitherto labour'd ; They have now, for a long tract of Time, Year after Year, exceedingly increas'd, without a proportionable Increase of the Churches and Chapels appointed to receive them : By which means vast Numbers of Souls have been excluded from a possibility of attending on the Publick Worship of God, and from all the Benefits of Christian Instruction. And the natural Consequence of this hath been, a gradual Defection from Piety and Virtue, to Irreligious Ignorance, and all manner of loose and licentious Living.

To the Increase of which, They also contributed, who took occasion from the Relaxation of those Laws, which made Absence from the Establish'd Church Penal, to withdraw themselves entirely from all Religious Assemblies ; altho' that very Act of Exemption, which gave Liberty, in the one respect, equally restrain'd it, in the other.

Nor hath the long Continuance of that just and necessary War, in which Your Majesty is now engag'd (and which, we trust, God will enable You to finish as gloriously as You have hitherto carried it on) been unattended with Consequences Prejudicial to the Interests of Religion and Goodness.

That this might not be our own Case, Your Majesty was pleas'd to use Your powerful Influences with the *States of Holland*, and to imploy Your Royal Bounty for the building of a Church, in which Your Subjects might serve God abroad, with the same Decency and Order as at home, and be instructed in such Religious Principles as might preserve them from the contagion of those Vices, to which a Military Life is too much expos'd. But notwithstanding this Design so piously intended by Your Majesty, and so readily promoted by the liberal Contributions of Your Subjects in the Army ; We cannot but lament that foreign Vices, too easily learnt in the Camp, have from thence spread themselves, by little and little, thro' the several Ranks of Men at Home, and occasion'd a visible increase of Luxury, Libertinism, and Profaneness. False Notions of Honour have made that reputable,
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which the Religion of Christ utterly condemns; and that Infamous, which it commands under the highest Penalties: So that They, who still dare to own themselves Christians, by not sending a Challenge, when affronted, or not accepting it, when sent, are really in a State of Persecution, on the Account of their strict Adherence to Christ and his Doctrine. The Prevalence of such Principles and Practises doth, in our humble Opinion, tend, not only to the Dishonour, but even to the Disbelief of the Gospel, among those, who are either persuaded, that it is lawful, and laudable, or, without such a Persuasion, determin'd, to act in Contradiction to the plain Precepts of it.

The Emissaries from *Rome* have not been wanting to lay hold of this Opportunity for the Advancement of their Cause; to which nothing is so serviceable as *Scepticism*, and looseness of Life: And these, therefore, they have always encourag'd to the best of their Power. They have swarm'd in our Streets of late Years, and have been very busy in making Converts: And, since their known way of dealing in such Cases, is, to bring Men round to Infallibility by the way of Infidelity; we doubt not but their subtle Arts, and restless Endeavours of this kind, may be reckon'd one Cause of the present Growth of Irreligion among us.

Other Causes have also concurr'd; As the want of a vigorous Execution of those Laws, Proclamations, and Injunctions, which were piously fram'd; and the faint and ineffectual Prosecutions of some notorious Offenders: By which means, what was design'd to curb and restrain their Insolence, tended rather to heighten and nourish it.

Nor are we insensible, how much Religion hath suffer'd by vain Pretences, to fathom those Depths of Divine Wisdom, which are unsearchable, and to advance nice Explications of Mysteries which are inexplicable; by the Misapplication of Reasonings to Matters of meer Revelation; by the Attempts made to shew, how all the Steps taken in that great Work of Omnipotence, the Creation of the World, were to be accounted for by the known Laws of Motion; and that the Destruction of it, by the Deluge, might in like manner be explain'd. For the Tendency of such Attempts hath been,
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to confine the Thoughts of Men to second Causes, and to intimate, how little the Wisdom of God was concern'd in making the World.

But These, and such Causes as these, having a less general and discernable Influence towards producing the Evils complain'd of; We have chosen rather to rest in the Consideration of those, which are more extensive and apparent, and have been remarkably fruitful of the **ILL CONSEQUENCES**, which we are next to lay before your Majesty.

The Dishonour, which the late excessive Growth of Infidelity, Heresy and Profaneness, hath brought on our holy Faith, on our Church, and Nation, is too great to be disregarded, and too manifest to be dissembled. The Gospel cannot but be blemished by this Reflection, That, at a time, when the strongest Evidences of its Divine Original have been produc'd, and set in the fairest Light, so many should revolt from it. Our Ecclesiastical and Civil Constitution must needs undergo Reproach; as if we either wanted Laws to punish such Enormities, or Zeal to turn the Edge of those Laws upon daring Offenders.

It is lamentable to reflect, how many Souls have been lost, by imbibing wicked Doctrines from those Books, which have been scatter'd for several Years with Impunity thro' this Kingdom; how many more are endanger'd by too near Approaches towards Infidelity, tho' they have not as yet actually arriv'd to it; what a Spirit of Indifference and Neutrality in Religion hath been infus'd, thro' such Vehicles, into the Minds of Men, and hath, at last, so far prevail'd, as to become the distinguishing Character of the Age we live in.

We doubt not, but that divers of Your Majesty's Subjects, either by the Scandal arising from the late observable Growth of Profaneness, or by sharing the Contagion of it, have at last been perverted to Popery; and we are sure, that many of them have been made worse Men, and worse Subjects, by the means of it. For Infidelity, where embrac'd, cancels all the strongest Obligations of Duty, and dissolves those Religious Bands of Obedience, by which the Thrones of Princes are best secur'd, and their Authority most firmly supported. And therefore, we cannot but observe to Your Majesty, that they, who derided

Churches, and Creeds, and Mysteries, were the same who insulted the Memory, and justify'd the Murder of the Royal Martyr; applauded the Rebellion rais'd against Him, and have taken a great deal of wicked Pains, in collecting, and publishing the Works of those Writers, who were the most declar'd and irreconcilable Enemies to Monarchy.

But the worst Consequence of our Impieties is, that they have made us obnoxious to the Displeasure of Almighty God; who may Justly, on their Account, be provok'd to visit us with his severest Judgments, by stopping the continued Current of Success, with which he hath hitherto bless'd our Affairs, and delivering us into the Hands of our Enemies; by withdrawing the pure Light of his Gospel from us, and letting in the Abominations of Popery among us.

Our only Comfort under this sad Prospect, is, That as far and wide as the Infection hath spread, there are many still left, who continue untainted by it; many, who, imitating the pious Example, set by Your Majesty, *hold fast the Profession of their Faith without wavering*, and adorn it with all manner of Christian Graces and Virtues, in the midst of a perverse and crooked Generation. For the mighty Growth of Infidelity hath been attended with one Good Consequence, among divers Ill ones; That the Zeal of devout Persons, hath thereby been excited to do every thing, that in them lay, towards resisting and stemming this Torrent of Impiety. Nor have their Endeavours been fruitless; our Eyes daily see the publick and happy Effects of them. Divine Service, and Sacraments, have of late been oftner celebrated, and better frequent-ed, than formerly; the Catechising of Youth hath been more generally practis'd, and with greater Success: Vast Sums have been furnish'd by private Contributions, to sustain the Charge of Educating poor Children in a pious and useful manner; and many other new and noble Institutions of Charity have been set on foot, of which some mention was made in the Entrance of the Account, now laid before Your Majesty.

Of these We already feel the good Influence, and hope, that they may hereafter prove a Remedy equal to the Disease, under which We labour. In the mean time,
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other Methods of redressing these great Mischiefs may, we humbly conceive, be successfully try'd; such, as the Course of the foregoing Reflections, and Your Majesty's great Wisdom and Piety *have already suggested* to You.

We entertain not the least doubt of Your Majesty's firm Resolution to render the Laws, and Edicts, set forth for the Suppression of Immorality and Profaneness, useful to that Purpose, by an impartial and vigorous Execution of them; and to reform the Corruptions of the Stage, which have been so instrumental in vitiating young and innocent Minds, and have given Matter of so just Offence to all serious and devout *Christians*.

We are entirely persuaded, that Your Majesty will, in the most effectual manner, discountenance all such Persons, as are profligate in their Lives, or the known Abettors and Spreaders of impious Opinions, by excluding them from all Marks of Your Royal Favour.

And the repeated Assurances which Your Majesty (whom God long preserve) hath been pleased to give to Your People, of Your Care to transmit the Succession of the Crown in the *Protestant Line*, as establish'd by Law, give us great hopes, that our Enemies of the *Romish Communion*, will at last be effectually discouraged from attempting the Ruin of that excellent Church, of which, under Christ, Your Majesty is the Chief Governour, and glorious Defender.

And we promise our selves, from the happy Application of these Remedies, which Your Majesty alone is able (and not more able, than willing) to apply, great and durable Effects.

With inexpressible Satisfaction we reflect upon the noble Provision made by the present Parliament for Fifty New Churches, and we please our selves with a prospect of the Ground, which will every Day be gain'd, by this means, upon Vice and Irreligion; when all Excuses for non-attendance on the Publick Worship will be remov'd, and the Law, which makes those, who abstain from all sorts of Religious Assemblies, still obnoxious to Punishment, may be exerted in its utmost Force, without giving just occasion of Complaint to any Man.

Nor are We without hope, that these our Synodical Assemblies, regularly and constantly held, may be one

useful means of checking the Attempts of profane Men, and preventing the Growth of pernicious Errors. Especially, if, by the Authority, or Intervention of such Synods, some way might be found to restore the Discipline of the Church, now too much relax'd and decay'd, to its pristine Life and Vigor; and to strengthen the ordinary Jurisdiction of Ecclesiastical Courts, now too much restrain'd and infeebl'd: Both which Ends, as far as they shall appear to be subservient to the Interests of Religion and Vertue, and no ways to interfere with the Laws and Liberties of our Country, We do not, under the propitious Influence of Your Majesty's Administration, despair of attaining.

But that, for which we at present, in most earnest, and most humble manner address our selves to Your Majesty, is, That by Your Royal Interposition, an Act may be obtain'd, for restraining the present excessive and scandalous Liberty of Printing wicked Books at home, or importing the like from abroad, in such manner, as to the Wisdom of Your Majesty and Your Parliament shall seem most Expedient. For, as we take this to have been the chief Source and Cause of these Evils; whereof we now complain; so we question not, but that the Removal of it would be the most speedy and effectual Cure of them.

Our daily and fervent Prayer to God is, That Your Majesty may be the happy Instrument of these, and many other Blessings, to this Church and State; That You may be as Prosperous in Your Designs against Infidelity, and Vice, here at Home, as You have been in all Your Undertakings against the common Enemy Abroad; and may, by that means, add, what alone is wanting to compleat the Glory, and crown the Successes of Your ever memorable Reign.

*A Representation as drawn up by the Upper-
House, &c.*

May it please Your Majesty,

WE, the Archbishop, the Bishops, and the Clergy of the Province of Canterbury, in Convocation assembled, are deeply sensible of the many Blessings and Advantages of Your Gracious and Prosperous Reign: Amongst which, there is none that more affects us, than the tender Care and Concern shewn by Your Majesty for the flourishing State of Religion, and the Godly Zeal You have express'd against the Wickedness of Those, who, by loose and profane Principles and Practices, have endeavour'd to undermine and destroy it.

We are thankful to Almighty God, who hath put it into Your Royal Heart to repress these impious and daring Attempts; and, for that End, among others, to order Your Clergy to be called together, that they might in Synod, humbly offer their Counsel and Assistance.

It is, on many Accounts, our Duty, to do the utmost that in us lies, towards promoting so excellent a Work. We have, therefore, apply'd our selves with Diligence to consider the Matters to us referr'd; and do now, in Obedience to Your Royal Commands, humbly lay before Your Majesty,

A REPRESENTATION of the present State of Religion among Us, with regard to the late excessive Growth of Infidelity, Heresy and Profaneness.

IT is with the greatest Affliction and Concern that we enter upon a Work so unpleasant in all Respects, were it not for the Hopes it gives us of seeing these Evils in some measure removed; and therefore, we shall not give Your Majesty the Uneasiness of a particular Relation, either of the blasphemous Passages that have been publish'd from the Press, or the great Impieties that have been committed: But in discharge of
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of the Trust reposed in us by Your Majesty, we think ourselves obliged to lay before You such an Account of the Progress of Infidelity, Heresy, and Profaneness amongst us, as may let Your Majesty see the Causes and Occasions which have given the greatest rise to them, and the sad Consequences with which they are attended.

It is hard to come to the beginning of these great Evils, which all times have complain'd of; and therefore to confine our own Enquiries, and lessen Your Majesty's Trouble as much as we can, we shall look no farther back for the Source of them, than that long unnatural Rebellion, which loosen'd all the Bonds of Discipline and Order, and overturn'd the goodly Frame of our Ecclesiastical and Civil Constitution.

The Hypocrisy, Enthusiasm, and variety of wild and monstrous Errors which abounded during those Confusions, begat in the Minds of many Men too easily carried into Extremes, a disregard for the very Forms of Religion and proved the Occasion of great Libertinism, and Profaneness, which hath ever since too much prevail'd amongst us; the Seeds of Infidelity and Heresy which were then sown did soon after appear, and the *Tares* have sprung up in *great abundance*.

The Authority of the present Canon of Scripture hath been represented as standing upon a very precarious Foundation, and the Inspiration of the whole hath been call'd in Question.

The Miracles recorded in Scripture have been disputed and compared to the fabulous Relations of those that occur in Heathen Writers.

All Mysteries in Religion have been exploded as absurd and useless Speculations, and several Fundamental Articles of our most Holy Faith have not only been call'd in question, but rejected.

The *Arrian* and *Socinian* Heresies have been propagated with great Boldness; The Doctrine of a *Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead*, hath been deny'd and scoffed at; The Satisfaction made for the Sins of Mankind, by the precious Blood of Christ hath been either directly renounced, or very ungratefully lessen'd; The Establish'd Creeds of the Church have been represented as unwarrantable Impositions:

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Even at this time when we are thus met by Your Majesty's Writ, and exhorted by Your Gracious L E T T E R to consult of Methods for repressing pernicious Errors and Impieties, a Book hath been Printed, wherein the *Arrian* Doctrine (of which we cannot but declare our utter Abhorrence) is avow'd and maintain'd, and the Truth of it is threatned to be shewn by large and elaborate Proofs in other Treaties from the same Hand, which are soon to follow. To this Book the Author hath prefix'd his Name, and hath not been afraid to dedicate it to the Archbishop, Bishops and Clergy of this Province, in Convocation assembled, with Invitation to all to encourage his Design by their Subscriptions to it, and not without laying the Imputation of *Amichristianism* upon all those who shall not approve it.

The natural Immortality of the Soul hath upon different Schemes and Views been opposed as a vulgar Error, and the Necessity of all Humane Thoughts and Actions hath been asserted, to the overturning the Foundations of all Religion, whether, natural or instituted, and to the rendring all Notions of Good and Evil, of Rewards and Punishments, whether in this Life, or the next groundless and vain.

Others have endeavour'd to root out of Mens Minds all Notions of a Church, as a Society instituted by Christ, with peculiar Powers and Privileges, and proper Officers to administer the Word and Sacraments; and so to blend and confound the Spiritual Society with the Temporal as to make every thing in Religion, its divine Truths, and most sacred Ordinances dependant on the Will of the Civil Magistrate, as deriving solely from him their Sanction and Authority. Nay, these Religious Ordinances themselves, even the Chief of them, *Baptism* and the *Supper of the Lord* have been spoken of with such a degree of ungodly Mockery and Scorn, as to fill the Hearts of good Christians with Horror and Astonishment.

The Frauds of *Pagan* and *Popish Priests* have been display'd, in order to represent all Priests as Imposers upon the Credulity of Mankind; and draw Infamy upon the *Priesthood* in general, and to render the Order itself, in what Religion soever it was found, equally the Object of publick Aversion and Contempt. The

The Books containing the Errors and Impieties above-mention'd have been the more easily publish'd and dispersed since the Expiration of the Act for restraining the Press; and thro' the greater liberty of Printing, which thereon ensu'd, have the Vicious and Profane had more Opportunities to scatter their Papers for corrupting the Manners of Men.

Not only several Pieces formerly written on the side of Infidelity, which might have been forgotten without such a Revival, have been collected into Volumes, and publish'd again, but Mock-Catechisms fram'd in a light manner have been cry'd in the Streets, to depreciate the excellent Summaries of our Christian Faith, and as far as possible to root out of Mens Minds, the Sense of those great Truths that are contain'd in them.

This Profaneness hath been much increased by the Licentiousness of the Stage, where the worst Examples have been placed in the best Lights, and recommended to Imitation; and the various Images thus Painted to the Life, and set out with all manner of Advantage, have made such Impressions upon the Minds of the Young and Unwary, as are not easy to be effaced. Where the Bond of Wedlock hath been generally treated as a ridiculous and burthensom Yoke, to the great Prejudice of Society and Virtue, and every thing Sacred hath been exposed. Where the Office of the Priesthood hath been made a matter of Scorn and Reproach; and where at the opening a New *Theatre*, the building of Churches was impiously derided, as a vain and useless Work, the Effect only of Superstition and Ignorance.

It is indeed for the purpose of the Irreligious to discourage the Building of Churches where they are so much wanted, and where the want of them is in all appearance, one great Occasion of the Irreligion of many. For by this means, vast numbers of Souls have, in and about these two populous Cities, been excluded from a Possibility of attending the Publick Worship of God, and from all the Benefits of Christian Instruction. And the natural Consequence of this hath been a gradual Defection from Piety and Virtue to Irreligious Ignorance, and all manner of loose and licentious Living.

And as the want of Churches here, so the want of competent Maintenance for the Service of many that are in the Country, where two or three Cures do not often afford enough to support a Minister, is, tho' not a late, yet a like Occasion of Profaneness and Ignorance there: For, by this means many Parishes have no Minister residing among them, and are several Sundays in the Year without any Service at all; and the Ministers, by having so much Duty upon them, cannot discharge it as they ought, nor have time for the Catechising young Persons, which is so necessary a part of Christian Instruction.

And to the Increase of this Mischief, both in City and Country, have They also contributed, who have taken occasion from the Relaxation of those Laws which made Absence from the Establish'd Church penal, to withdraw themselves entirely from all Religious Assemblies, altho' the very Act of Exemption, which gave Liberty in one respect, equally restrained it in the other.

From these several Occasions hath ensued a great Neglect of the religious Observance of the Lord's Day, too great a part of which is spent by many in Publick Houses, and other Diversions wholly unsuitable to the time set apart for the more immediate Service of God; tho' we have reason to think, that thro' the Care of Magistrates and others, some Reformation hath been made of this Matter.

But whatever share any of the Causes and Occasions above-mentioned may have had in that Growth of Infidelity, Heresy, and Profaneness amongst us, We cannot but bewail the Effect; considering the Dishonour it brings on our Holy Faith, our Church, and Nation; and the Hurt it has done to Your Majesty's People, many of whom have been made worse Men, and worse Subjects, by the Means of it.

It is lamentable to reflect how many Souls have been lost by imbibing wicked Doctrines from those Books which have been scattered for several Years thro' this Kingdom; how many more are endangered by too

near Approaches to Infidelity (tho' they have not as yet actually arrived to it) from a Spirit of Indifference and Neutrality in Religion which hath been infused into their Minds by these Means.

But what we have further to apprehend from our Impieties is, that they have made us obnoxious to the Displeasure of Almighty God, who may justly on their Account be provoked to visit us with his Judgments, by stopping the continued Current of Success with which he hath hitherto blessed our Affairs, and delivering us into the Hands of our Enemies; by withdrawing the pure Light of his Gospel from us, and letting in the Abomination of Popery among us.

For the Emissaries from *Rome* have been all along very watchful to lay hold of these Opportunities for the Advancement of their Cause; to which nothing is so serviceable as Scepticism and Looseness of Life: These therefore, as well as the Errors and Divisions amongst us, they have always encouraged to the best of their Power, and improved to their own Advantage; representing in several Books, as well as in their common Conversation, the great Uncertainty of the Christian Religion upon Protestant Principles, and filling Mens Minds with infinite Doubts, the better to make them submit to an infallible Guide. They have swarmed in our Streets of late Years, as they do more particularly at this time, and are very busy in making Converts: Nor do we doubt but that divers of Your Majesty's Subjects, either from the Scandal taken at the Infidelity, Heresy, and Profaneness they see, or from sharing the Contagion of it, have, by their Arts, been perverted.

But notwithstanding that we have these Things to complain of, so much hath been done already towards taking off the Causes and Effects of these Evils, and to prevent the further Consequences of them, as to give us great hopes, that through the Blessing of God upon Your Majesty's Authority and Example, and the Endeavours of Your Subjects in their several Stations, we shall escape the Danger we have so much reason to fear.

And

For as Books have been published in favour of Heresy, and downright Infidelity; so others have been written from time to time, as occasion required, in Defence of the Fundamental Truths whether of Natural or Reveal'd Religion, with great Clearness and Strength of Argument: The vain Pleas of the several Advocates for Infidelity have been particularly considered and refuted, to the Silencing, if not the Conviction, of some of the principal of them.

A Lecture was Founded, not many Years since, by Mr. Boyle, in Defence of the Christian Religion against all the Adversaries of it; and many excellent and useful Sermons have been Preached and Published upon that Occasion.

Societies have been formed for the Reformation of Manners; Funds of Charity have been raised for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and of Christian Knowledge at Home, and for the pious Education of poor Children: Great variety of plain and useful Discourses have been distributed among the meaner sort for their more easy Improvement; and Parochial Libraries have been set up for the Use of Ministers in the Country, that they might be better provided for the Instruction of those committed to their Charge.

Authority hath often interposed for the countenancing these excellent Designs, and for withstanding the bold Attempts that have been made upon our common Faith; and for preventing the Increase of Irreligion and Profaneness, Royal Injunctions and Proclamations have issued, Acts of Parliament have passed, Prosecutions at Law have been ordered, Gracious Speeches from the Throne have been made, and from thence such bright Patterns of Piety and Virtue have shone forth, as have, no doubt, prevailed upon many, tho' the Influence of them hath not extended so far as might have been expected.

But then the Infidelity of some hath been attended with this good Consequence in others, that the Zeal of devout Persons hath thereby been excited to do every

thing that in them lay towards resisting and stemming the Increase of this great Evil: Nor have their Endeavours been altogether fruitless; our Eyes daily see the happy Effects of them; Divine Service and Sacraments have of late been oftner celebrated, and better frequented, than formerly; the Catechising of Youth hath been more generally practised, and with greater Success; vast Sums have been furnished by private Contributions to sustain the Charge of Educating poor Children in the pious manner abovementioned; and many other new and noble Institutions of Charity have been set on foot.

Many Churches have been Repaired and Adorned at the Expence of the several Parishioners, and other Benefactors; and many Chapels opened in the larger Parishes, tho' not sufficient to answer the Wants of the Inhabitants. Great Sums of Money have been by Publick Authority Provided and Applied for the Building, Supporting, and Adorning other Churches; and Your Majesty has been graciously pleased, upon our humble Address, to recommend to Your Parliament to find out Means for the Building of such as are still wanting: of which from the great Satisfaction with which Your Message was receiv'd, and the great Progress made upon it, we hope to see the blessed Effect; when all, who are religiously disposed, will have the Opportunity of giving publick Testimony of it, and the Careless be left without Excuse.

In the mean time other Methods of Redressing these Mischiefs may, we humbly conceive, be successfully tried, such as Your Majesty's great Wisdom and Piety, and the foregoing Observations, will suggest to You.

We entertain not the least Doubt of Your Majesty's firm Resolution to render the Laws and Proclamations set forth for the Suppression of Immorality and Profaneness useful to that purpose, by an impartial and vigorous Execution of them; and to Reform the Corruptions of the Stage, which have been so instrumental in vitiating young and innocent Minds, and have
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We are entirely perswaded, that Your Majesty will, in the most effectual manner, discountenance all such Persons as are profligate in their Lives, or the known Abettors and Spreaders of Impious Opinions; and the repeated Assurances which Your Majesty (whom God long preserve) hath been pleased to give to Your People of Your Care to transmit the Succession of the Crown in the Protestant Line as Establish'd by Law, give us great Hopes, that our Enemies of the Romish Communion will at last be effectually discouraged from attempting the Ruin of that Excellent Church, of which, under Christ, Your Majesty is the chief Governour, and glorious Defender.

From the Application of these several Means, which we do not doubt but Your Majesty will use, we promise ourselves very great and durable Effects: But that for which we at present in most earnest and most humble manner address our selves to Your Majesty is, That by Your Royal Interposition, an Act may be obtained for Restraining the present excessive and scandalous Liberty of Printing wicked Books at Home, and importing the like from Abroad; in such manner as to the Wisdom of Your Majesty, and Your Parliament, shall seem most expedient. For as we take this Liberty to have been one chief Source and Cause of those Evils whereof we have spoken, so we question not but the Restraint of it would go a great way in the Cure of them.

There is another pernicious Custom that has very much prevail'd amongst us under the false Notion of Honour, which we beg Leave to mention in this place, and that is the Practice of Fighting Duels, which has so far obtain'd, that Your Majesty hath had many Occasions, and some very lately, to see the dismal Effects of it.

We do therefore, in all humble Duty, beg Your Majesty to take the most effectual Methods to extinguish those false Notions, so contrary to the Laws of God,
and

an also destructive of all Society, and to put a Stop to this wicked and unchristian Practice by such Means as Your Majesty, in Your great Wisdom, shall think most proper.

We have also good hope, that all employed in *Authority under Your Majesty*, will, as we pray, *truly and indifferently minister Justice to the Punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and to the Maintenance of true Religion and Virtue*; and wish that some Way may be found for the Recovery and Improvement of Christian Knowledge and Piety in Families, which we fear is too much neglected.

We likewise hope, that especial Care will be taken of the Education of young People at the Universities, by providing that Tutors make it their Business to teach their Pupils the Principles of the Christian Religion in the course of their other Studies, and endeavour to make them serious in it, with a particular Eye to such as are designed for Holy Orders.

And for Ourselves, who are called to this Holy Function; We beg Leave to assure your Majesty, that we will take all possible Care of the Discharge of our own Duty, and do all that in us lies, that the Canons of our Church may be strictly observed both by Our selves and those committed to our Charge.

We have those Parts of our Discipline which Your Majesty hath in your great Goodness thought fit to recommend to us for further Improvement, under our most serious Consideration; and hope, in some measure to answer the Wants of the Church, and Your Majesty's Expectations in referring them to us; as we shall at all times hereafter, as often as Your Majesty shall be pleased to require our Attendance for these Purposes, endeavour to make our Synodical Meetings subservient to the good Order and Establishment of this Church, the Interest and Advantage of the Christian Religion, the Satisfaction of Your Majesty, and the Honour of God.

And

And our daily and fervent Prayer to God shall be,
That Your Majesty may be the happy Instrument of
these and many other Blessings to this Church and
State; That you may be as prosperous in your Designs
against Infidelity and Vice here at Home, as you have
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